However, you need to be aware of the fact that, should you become sick, the likelihood of you being evacuated home may be extremely unlikely," he stresses. This is due to countries attempting to limit the spread of the disease by limiting the circulation of ill people and of the viruses they carry.

"Even though we have partnered with Europ Assistance in order to make every attempt to provide the assistance required and get you out of the country where you contracted the disease, there is no guarantee that you will be allowed back into South Africa."

Jordan stresses that taking preventative measures and making wise choices about where to travel is the smart way to avoid this disease. Here too are some tips from expert medical sources, including the Mayo Clinic in the US, on how best to protect yourself:

• Avoid going to places where outbreaks have occurred. Before travelling to Africa, find out about current epidemics, and stay as far away as possible from affected areas.

• Wash your hands frequently. Virologists say the virus actually doesn’t spread easily and is easily killed with water and soap. So use soap and water, or alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol when soap and water aren’t available.

• Stop shaking hands. Habitual handshaking is an unhygienic habit that allows movement of germs between people, and can help spread contagious illness, say researchers at the Welsh University of Aberystwyth. Fist-bumping is better or, why not emulate the Japanese habit of bowing instead of touching hands at all.

• Avoid buying or eating meat from wild animals sold in local markets in developing countries.

• Avoid direct contact with infected people. Caregivers should avoid contact with the person’s body fluids and tissues, including blood, semen, vaginal secretions and saliva. People with Ebola are most contagious in the later stages of the disease.

• Keep perspective and don’t become paranoid at hysterical media coverage. Virologists say seasonal flu is far more of a threat, and will kill far more people than the Ebola virus ever will.

A few months ago the message about the Ebola virus was “don’t panic, these are just a few isolated incidents”. Today, though the “don’t panic” message still holds true, the Ebola outbreak has not only been declared an epidemic, the World Health Organization has declared it an international public health emergency.

Since this Ebola outbreak began in Guinea in early 2014, the number of cases has surpassed anything ever experienced before and, although the outbreak is mainly confined to West Africa, many people around the world are worried that the disease will spread.

Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a severe, often fatal disease found in humans and other primates (monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees). Its early symptoms i.e. fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain and lack of appetite are similar to flu, cholera, typhoid and malaria. However, once the virus manifest these early symptoms lead to vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, impaired kidney and liver function, and in some cases, both internal and external bleeding.

Although several vaccines are being tested, there is still no licensed vaccine for Ebola virus disease. The good news is that the survival rate for this particular outbreak of Ebola is higher than previous outbreaks, with 47% of people pulling through. If you do contract the disease, it is particularly important that you receive intensive care, where you’ll be treated for dehydration with intravenous fluids or orally, with electrolyte solutions.

"It is important to remember that the Ebola is not an airborne virus. It is spread only through direct physical contact with the bodily fluids such as the urine and blood of people who have become infected with or died from Ebola virus disease. Therefore the disease can be avoided if precautions are taken," says Peter Jordan, Principal Officer for Fedhealth.

He suggests that people carefully consider travelling to targeted countries as quarantine situations or not being allowed back into the country mean that your scheme benefits will not be able to assist if you do fall ill outside the country.

"Ebola treatment is considered an emergency medical condition and therefore a Prescribed Minimum Benefit (PMB). This means that if you are diagnosed with Ebola in South Africa, Fedhealth will cover all costs related to treatment including hospitalisation," says Jordan.
“However, you need to be aware of the fact that, should you become sick, the likelihood of you being evacuated home may be extremely unlikely,” he stresses. This is due to countries attempting to limit the spread of the disease by limiting the circulation of ill people and of the viruses they carry.

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